



Railroads criss-crossed the Northwest many years before the Vancouver depot was built in 1907. (Staff photo by Jerry Coughlan)

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Railroads dot history of county

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of stories on buildings of historic or architectural interest in Clark County.)

Not so many years ago, railroad depots served many communities up and down the line throughout Clark County.

Now there is only one left — the Vancouver depot that offers ticket service and a waiting room for Amtrak passengers.

The Vancouver railroad depot was built in 1907 and has remained essentially unchanged for 73 years. A photograph in *The Coast* magazine for April 1909 shows the depot not long after its construction. It looks the same today.

Although railroad construction began in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1870s, it was many years before the first rails were laid in Clark County.

The first railroad here was a logging road up Whipple Creek near Ridgefield. Another railroad, the Vancouver, Klickitat and Yakima, was begun, but never got out of the county.

In 1901, a branch line was laid between Vancouver and Kalama and connected Clark County with the Puget Sound area.

It was not until completion of the so-called North Bank railroad in 1908 that Vancouver was connected to a transcontinental line, a privilege Portland had enjoyed since construction of the Northern Pacific line along the south bank of the Columbia River in the early 1880s.

Also in 1908, the first railroad bridge across the Columbia was completed at Vancouver, finally tying Clark County to the rail network of the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

The Vancouver depot is at the end of West 11th Street where it intersects with the present Burlington Northern tracks. The stuccoed building has a two-story central section covered by a cross-gable roof and one-story wings extending to the north and south. Broad triangular dormers are placed low on the gable roofs of these wings.

The interior of the passenger waiting room, where vertical tongue-and-groove paneling forms a wainscoting, is little altered from that day in 1908 when the first passenger train wheezed to a stop in front of the station.

According to the Regional Planning Council report, the Vancouver depot has historical value for its role as the key station in the rail system within the county. It still is an operating station and retains much of its original architectural integrity.